

15.07 5645 *Obitaries - Women*
AD. BAK.
(Formerly
Ayer
Woman)

MR. ABBOT'S
S E R M O N
TO
YOUNG PEOPLE.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

LIBRARY

1911

1911

1911

THE DUTY OF YOUTH.

IN A

S E R M O N,

OCCASIONED

BY THE

DEATH OF MISS *SARAH AYER*,

DAUGHTER OF MR. MOSES AYER,

WHO EXPIRED APRIL 7th, 1802, IN THE 22d YEAR OF
HER AGE;

AND DELIVERED

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE INTERMENT

ON

LORD'S DAY.

BY ABIEL ABBOT,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN HAVERHILL.

HAVERHILL:

FROM THE PRESS OF

GALEN H. FAY.

1802.

REVEREND SIR,

DEEPLY impressed with the solemn truths contained in the sermon, preached after the funeral of Miss AYER, and solicitous for the promotion of early piety, the ladies of your society venture to request a copy for the press. As this sermon was occasioned by the early death of one of our number, we hope, Sir, no other apology necessary for this application. While we affectionately remember him, who, with such fidelity and impressiveness, has so frequently enforced upon our minds the importance of religion, the beauty of holiness, may we not be unmindful of that first great duty--*to remember and love our Creator.*

Haverhill, April 19, 1802.

TO THE LADIES OF THE RELIGIOUS SOCIETY, WHICH I
HAVE THE HAPPINESS TO SERVE IN THE GOSPEL.

LADIES,

THE request contained in your letter you support by reasons, which I cannot resist; I readily comply with it. The defects of a sermon, written in ill health and great haste, I will forget in the hope that it may be blessed to render lasting those impressions, which you think were made at the time of delivery. At the least, it may serve as a remembrancer of the peculiarly solemn and affecting scenes of that day, which lent their impressive aid to the sermon.

The personal respect and affection and the general seriousness, exhibited on this occasion, are affecting circumstances to your Pastor; and he sincerely joins you in the prayerful wish that you may never be unmindful of that first great duty--*to remember and love your Creator.*

ABIEL ABBOT.

Haverhill, April 19, 1802.

FUNERAL SERMON.

ECCLESIASTES XII. 1.

REMEMBER NOW THY CREATOR IN THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH, WHILE THE EVIL DAYS COME NOT, NOR THE YEARS DRAW NIGH, WHEN THOU SHALT SAY, I HAVE NO PLEASURE IN THEM.

AS the text, for the following discourse, is addressed wholly to the *young* in this assembly. May the blessed Spirit of God set home upon your hearts what shall now be said. I confess to you that I never address *you in particular*, but with a considerable hope of effect. Youth is the season of impressions; your hearts are tender; your affections are quick; your perception is strong and lively. Affecting subjects, presented to you, are interesting; their effect is instantly manifest in your countenances, which color with your feelings, and in your eyes, which are not unfrequently filled with tears. Those reasons, which
make

make it particularly your duty to attend to religion, while *young*, make it the duty of your religious instructor to pay particular attention to you. Of this, I hope you will bear me witness, I have not been wholly negligent.---If your minds are at all times apt to impressions, they must be doubly so today. If you were even cold and dull on common occasions, you would feel on this. If death and eternity have appeared to you remote realities, they are brought near to you now; you have seen the power of death on *one* of your number and her spirit has winged its flight into eternity. It were strange indeed, if you should remain untouched by these things. But you are not; a combination of circumstances renders this death peculiarly affecting to very many. Some of you were united to her by the tender ties of family love. Many of you stood in natural *relation* to her, if not very near, yet it was *dear*. Many were pleasingly connected with her in learning the heavenly art of singing the divine praises; while in health you testified your respect by selecting her as one of your leaders; and now she is dead, you manifest your affection and grief by the badges of mourning for her as a sister. This then is an occasion too precious for me to lose; while *death*, and *eternity*, and *heaven* are by this event much and solemnly in your minds, I will tell you how to prepare for them. *Listen; consider; remember.*

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The text presents to you three things to be considered.

I. A duty.

II. The *peculiar* season of it.

III. Reasons for attending to it *now*.

I. A duty. *Remember thy Creator.* This is a great duty, and by the influence it is calculated to have upon you, may be considered the principle of all religion. No doubt Solomon intended in that large sense to have it understood in this passage. To remember is to *keep in mind*. To have *God* in your thoughts habitually must keep you from *sin*, and move you to *duty*. It is a just and strong description of the wicked---*God is not in all their thoughts*. This is the reason, why they feel no restraint; why they dare to insult his name with blasphemy, and to trample on his laws with bold defiance.

Let me entreat you to discharge this great and comprehensive duty. As the first step to be taken, gain a true notion of God. Mistake not his nature; leave out of your idea of God no one of his attributes. Consider him in a transcendent and infinite degree, *great, wise, good; just, holy, true*. Leave out *one* of these traits, and you have not the
idea

idea of God ; and the influence upon your minds of remembering him would be abated, might be lost ; might be even *pernicious*. Consider Him *great* and *mighty*, but not *good*, then what horrible terrors must rush upon your minds. You would then see his amazing power armed with vengeance, which no submission could soften, which no innocence or goodness itself could disarm. Consider him *good*, but not *holy*, *just*, or *true*, which words are much alike in signification, as applied to God. What effect upon you would the remembrance of him as such a Being obtain ? You would not *fear* him. You would presume, let your conduct be as it might, that you should find refuge in his *goodness* from every evil, from every punishment of your ill desert. So to remember God, would render you tenfold more wicked.

This is sufficient to suggest to you the necessity of obtaining in the first place a *just notion* of God. This do by your bibles. *Search the scriptures ; they are they, which testify of Him*. The more you read, the more you will comprehend of this infinite Being. We are told more of Him in that book, than all the world *have* or *could* discover by reasoning and considering his works. Reason enquires ; but often doubts or hesitates on this and that point concerning God. Scripture speaks out clearly ; and its decision is *certain*. Read the bible therefore much and often to learn what *you are*

to believe concerning God. Thus fixing in your minds the correct idea of God, revolve it continually. Have it always at hand for use. Wherever you are, be impressed with it according to your circumstances. *It will prompt you to every duty.* Is it *morning*? are you rising out of your beds, on which you have been protected and refreshed? *Remember God*; and gratefully fall upon your knees to thank *Him* for your safety and comfort. Is it *night*? and are you about to forget yourselves in sleep? Remember God, your Creator, the Watchman, who never slumbers nor sleeps; and supplicate *Him* to remember and guard you. Are you in safety? acknowledge God's providence, as the means of it. Are you in danger? immediately look to *Him* for deliverance. Are you sick? *through all means* look to his power alone to heal you. Are you dying? (that time will come) look to *Him* to give you eternal life.--- Through the successive hours of the day, think on God, that *whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, you may do all to his glory.* Say often with yourselves in the words of Hagar---*Thou, God, seeft me!* This thought will arouse you out of indolence; it will stimulate you to duty. You will think you have never done enough to please such an Inspector. You will be humbled that you do so little; you will send up a frequent petition for His help, that you may be enabled to do more and to do better.

As it will prompt you to every duty, so the remembrance of God will *restrain you from every sin*; it will defeat your temptations. Whatever be your enticement to sin, remember your Creator, and exclaim with youthful Joseph---*How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!* Is there a temptation so strong, so violent, as not to give back, when met by this consideration? Wherever you may be, it is of equal force. You can retire into secrecy from the eye of men; and this is commonly done by the iniquitous and the lewd. But when you are retired, remember---*God is there*---your abominations, your pollutions are naked before Him. You *act* in his *presence*; if you sin, he will be a swift witness in the day of judgment against you. Did you always remember your Creator, I think you must *cease from sin*. There are few, who are not much restrained by the presence of *men*. If they be men of respect, men of piety, a sinner, somewhat *hardened*, blushes to offend them by words of blasphemy or deeds of pollution. But what is the most honorable man, what the holiest saint, compared with the *holy One*? That the sinner is not abashed infinitely more by the presence of God is that he *forgets Him*. He does not think Him present; he has no realizing sense, no conviction that He sees him. In darkness he thinks himself unseen; in privacy he feels alone; and this delusion is his temptation. Could he sin? did he remember---*That the darkness*

ness and the light are both alike to God--That there is no place where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.---Having mentioned something of the duty, enjoined in the text, let us now consider ;

II. The season of life *peculiarly* assigned to it.

The season is declared in those terms---*now---in the days of thy youth*. By this we are not to suppose that it is a duty, from which others are exempted. Far from this ; Solomon's object clearly is this, to have our *whole* lives brought under the influence of a continual remembrance of God. To effect this object, he earnestly exhorts the young to submit to it ; well knowing that if they fix the habit at their age, there is the fairest probability that it will be permanent as life. Knowing the propensity of the young to think there is time enough yet ; to say " a little more pleasure, a little longer indulgence in sin ; and then we will be serious and soberminded ;" he charges them not to defer it. Remember *now* thy Creator *in the days of thy youth*. It is not a moment too soon to begin ; and then proceeds to give reasons---which we will now consider.

III. *While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them.*

What

What is to be understood by these clauses may be seen in the context, which is a figurative description of old age and death. *Of old age*---when the senses shall be impaired; the faculties shattered; trifles become burthens; straws be obstacles; and the frame languish with diseases: and of *death*, which shall come to close the sad train of mortal evils, *the dust returning to the dust as it was, and the spirit returning to God, who gave it.* The argument of Solomon is plainly this---“Defer not religion to old age; it is the most unfit season in the world, should you attain it. Deferred till then, you will have no heart and mind to duty. The slightest obstacles will then stop you; small difficulties will perplex you. And in the midst of your feeble efforts, should you then put them forth, death will surprize you.” To this picture of old age Solomon resorts to arouse the attention of the young to religion. He bids them not put over their good resolutions to be executed in so unhopeful a time as this. He virtually says *this is your time now, in the days of youth*, and probably your ONLY time *to remember your Creator.*

Having presented to you Solomon’s general argument, let me now discuss particular ones, implied in it.

1. Youth is the *best* time to begin religion. Religion will never be so *easy* to you, as it now is.
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It is true, you have ardent feelings at this age and warm passions, which you may find no small difficulty to *restrain*, and which it may cost you some mortification to *deny*. But think you, if these should pass off with youth, that others as strong, as evil, and as hard to subdue will not succeed to their place? I may assure you they will. More; your difficulties will thicken upon you. The indulgence of your youthful passions will lend a vigor to your manly ones. Having been the captive of one company of enemies, you will fall the surer prey to the next, which assails you. Lose the victory in youth, and you will have little strength or courage to attempt one in manhood. But a triumph over youthful passions and lusts, will bring you into manhood with every advantage to pursue the war with success against every spiritual adversary which in succession may come to try you.

2. Youth is the *happiest* time for religion. Religion is a matter, which has much to do with the heart and affections; and when are these so apt to their offices, as when you are young? *Never*. If you remember your Creator, never may you expect more impressive views of Him than now; views which shall awaken your awe, your gratitude, your love, your devotion. As your affections are quick and strong towards their *human* objects, so will they be towards the *divine*, if you take the pains to set them. In religion therefore
you

you can *now* take the most comfort, if you give your heart to it ; that is, much more comfort, than you *can expect*, if you should have the grace to begin it later in life, when your heart will have become colder and your affections less susceptible.

3. Religion in youth prepares you for a happy subsequent life. Religion is often in scripture compared to a warfare. The figure is just and striking. If then in youth you are religious ; if, as to be religious implies, you have in a good degree subdued your passions, and have formed holy habits ; if the *great point* has been carried, you have *peace*, a sweet peace for the rest of your life of trial. Not indeed a *perfect* peace ; this is reserved for heaven. To continue the figure, you will have conflicts, but in these you will be commonly victorious ; and if at times you fall, you will rise again. Your state will be *peace* compared with that of the wicked ; they are in a continual conflict, conscience ever struggling and ever suppressed, though not without inflicting deep wounds in the heart. But *great peace have they, who love thy holy law, and nothing shall offend them.*

4. Religion in youth is a security against the evils of *alarmed sickness* and of *hopeless death*. They, who visit much among the sick and dying, know the value, the comfort of this security. I
will

will not describe to you in contrast the saint and sinner, sick and dying. I will not pretend to tell you all the peace and contentment of the former ; it is not to be truly described, but by him, who feels it : nor all the conviction, self condemnation, keen regret, and horrid apprehension of the latter ; *these* no tongue can describe, but his, who has felt them. But often have I thought, were immortality an illusion and there be no heaven beyond the grave, it is worth a whole life of effort and selfdenial--*to die as a christian*. This seems to be the point, which Solomon urges ; *Remember*, says he, *remember thy Creator, before the EVIL days come*, in which thou shalt have no pleasure. To remember him *then* will be only to fill you with terror if you forget him *now*. If you forget God now, the days, which are coming will be truly *evil* ; *evil* by those troubles, which your sins will occasion to you ; and *evil* on account of sickness and death. Remembering God in youth will *prevent* the former, and take away the *sting* of the latter. Let me add once more ;

5. Youth is the *only* time of religion, which is certain to *you*. This is an argument I think of irresistible importance. What, is eternity certain ? Are heaven and hell realities ? Will the judgment set to decide, who shall go into each ? Are you on the road to one or the other ? Is the journey short ? Is the present moment your *only certain* time ?
And

And can you lose it, and coolly run the infinite risk? "*There, may be another opportunity.*" Yes; but are *these* things to be rested on contingencies? Will you build your hope upon "*there may be another opportunity?*" If you *waste the best* season of religion; if you *despise the happiest* season, when will you find another? God only knows whether there be another. Grieve the Spirit of God and he will leave you, and your fate is then certain. Provoke God, and he may suddenly stop that life, which you spend in loving pleasure more, than in loving Him.

And now tell me, is there one in this assembly of the young, who can hold out against these considerations? Ought they not to be sufficient to bring you to a deliberate fixed resolution this day to *remember your Creator*? Or, must I resort to the *occasion* of this discourse? Must I point you to the *grave*, which you have just seen opened to receive one of your number and to enclose her till the morning of the resurrection? This is an appeal which *all* of you must feel, and very many of you feel perhaps too tenderly. Let this death not be forgotten; and the impressions, made by it upon your minds, never be lost. Two things I think it should teach you---*that youth is not too soon to feel the power of religion---and that a moment later may be too late*; her amiable life, and her calm, resigned, hopeful sickness prove the *first*; her early death

death demonstrates the *last*. If she had a wish to live it was but for *one* reason; that she *might live more to the honor of her Savior*. Life had not a charm for her but *that*; it was *vanity* in her eyes. And shall it have charms of every kind, *but this*, for you? Take wisdom from dying lips. Live to that purpose, for which alone she had a wish to live. *Remember your Creator and honor your Savior.*

To those young persons, who were constantly with her in her illness, or who were frequent in their visits, let me say; you have been affecting-ly instructed. You have seen the uncertainty of life and the worth of a hope, the foundation of which endures examination. Would you wish to contemplate death at no great distance, advancing with a steady and certain step, and yet not tremble? See that you immediately have on christian armor to meet him. While in health read and love the scriptures, and be constant in secret prayer.

She was a *sister* to many in this assembly, who loved her, and who have exerted that talent, which they cultivated in school with her, to honor and render more impressive her funeral. Is it not then *particularly* incumbent on you of the choir of fingers to improve this admonition of Providence? In the autumn of the year, she probably as little expected to be numbered among spirits in the spring, as any of you. But her voice is silent in the song of praise; she no longer delights or is delight-

ed among you by sweet sounds. Yet, hark ! do you not hear her in the *song above* ? where your love and charity have believed her gone. At least do you not *imagine* her already charmed and engaged in the songs of heaven ? We know not how spirits utter their joyful praises, nor how they listen to the anthems of glory ; yet doubtless the saints are instantly employed and wrapped into ecstasy on admission among the spirits of just men made perfect. If you indulge the pleasing thought that your companion has arrived to that joy, prepare to rejoin her. Cultivate your hearts with as much care, and endeavor to impart to them as much sweetness, as to your voices. Your sacred art should improve you in religion. It is a mean of grace ; sing always with devotion. *Feel* the praises you utter ; and *live* as devoutly as you sing.

With a few words more to all the young, applying the subject, I close. Let the exhortation of Solomon and the voice of God in this funeral make the most lasting impressions on all your minds. Let them *determine* you what to do. Resolve not faintly, but firmly, irreversibly resolve, to *remember your Creator*. Let this be a principle of universal efficacy. Let it operate in secret and in public, day and night. Let it be your motive to duty, and your check to temptation. Form *now* the habit of remembering Him. You have every motive to it, which can affect the heart. It is the *best* time ; it is the *happiest* season of life for religion ; it will
prepare

prepare you for years of peace and contentment ; for true and secure comfort in all the remainder of your lives. It will be your security against those dreadful evils---an *alarmed, fearful* sickness, and an *awful, hopeless death*. Religion is your guard, your only guard against surprise. Lose this time, and all may be lost. There is no promise of another time. *Now is the accepted time, behold now is the day of salvation. Watch, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. Stand with your loins girded and your lamps trimmed and burning. Be ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.* He will come, and his reward is with him. *Even so, come, Lord Jesus !*

AMEN.

LINES, SELECTED AND SET TO MUSIC BY MR. HOLTOKE,
AND PERFORMED BY THE CHOIR AFTER SERMON.

HARK ! she bids all her Friends	Sweet Soul, we leave thee to thy
adieu ;	Rest,
Some Angel calls her to the	Enjoy thy JESUS and thy God,
Spheres ;	Till we, from Bands of Clay re-
Our Eyes the radiant Saint pur-	least,
sue	Spring out and climb the shining
Thro' liquid Telescopes of Tears.	Road.
Farewel, bright soul, a short Fare-	While the dear Dust she leaves
wel,	behind
Till we shall meet again above	Sleeps in thy bosom, sacred
In the sweet Groves where Pleas-	Tomb !
ures dwell,	Soft be her Bed, her Slumbers
And Trees of Life bear Fruits of	kind,
Love.	And all her Dreams of Joy to
	come.

